

AN  
ADDRESS

TO THE

Writer of a SECOND LETTER to the AUTHOR

OF THE

CONFESSIO NAL:

CONTAINING

A VINDICATION of the Original Principles of the Reformers as laid down in the *Confessional*: and a CONFUTATION of the Principles on which the *Letter-writer* has founded his Argument for Subscription to Established Articles of Religion.

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By BENJAMIN DAWSON, L. L. D.

Rector of BURGH in SUFFOLK.

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. . . . *Meliora pii docuere parentes.* HOR.

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L O N D O N:

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I count in point of *decision of Church-Questions*, if I say of the *authority of the Church*, that it was *none*; I know no adversary I have, the Church of *Rome* only excepted. For this cannot be true, except we make the Church *judge of controversies*; the *contrary* to which we generally *maintain* against *that Church*.

HALES's Letter to Archbishop LAUD.





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REVEREND SIR,

**P**ERMIT me to assure you, that, in this Address, I wait upon you, neither in the spirit of contention, nor with a design of interrupting the important disputation, in which you have thought proper to engage with the Author of the *Confessional*. I should be sorry to do that. For, though it were most of all desirable to see the subject discussed with more prudence, precision, and a better spirit than has hitherto appeared, yet, it certainly is desirable, that it should be pursued with freedom: Because, in spite of every obstacle which intemperance of zeal, interested considerations, and dissingenuity of temper may throw in the way, some acquisition to the interests of truth may be hoped for. None can be made, where a communication of each

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others sentiments is not permitted. And even a view of the infirmities of reasoning and men's different prejudices on subjects of importance, which fervour of dispute seldom fails to afford, is itself an advantage, and may be improved to the refutation of error. So that sincere lovers of religious truth and who think the promotion of it of importance to mankind, will not, for any misbehaviour in the controversialists, regret that the *Confessional* hath so much attention paid to it by the learned, and especially by yourself, SIR, who have engaged to honour it with a much more ample notice than its former opponents have yet done.

PROCEED therefore, SIR, in the task you have set yourself and even in *your own way*, rather than drop it. The subject merits all that attention and labour which you seem disposed and determined to bestow upon it. I am only desirous that the chief object of the disquisition should be kept in view, *viz.* The right of establishing articles of faith and doctrine, in protestant churches, and requiring the  
same



same to be solemnly subscribed as tests of Orthodoxy; that so we may not lose sight of the end of the question, *viz.* The expediency, and (if such it shall appear) the duty, of a farther and speedy reformation in our Ecclesiastical establishment. In this view I shall confine myself to the purport of your second letter to the Author of the *Confessional*, which you say is, “to enquire, whether subscription “to articles of religion and the establishment of “confessions of faith and doctrine in protestant “Churches be justifiable or not (a).”

THE ill-success of those, who have entered this field of controversy before you in defence of the affirmative, (b) deters you not from boldly asserting, that such establishment is not only *justifiable*, on the known principles of protestants, but even *necessary*. In proof of this you think proper to attempt the removal of,

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(a) Second Letter to the author of the *Confessional*. page 1.

(b) Dr. Rutherford, Dr. Ibbetson, and the anonymous author of an Essay on establishments in religion.

what you call, the *Corner Stone* in the building of the *Confessional* (*a*): that is, you would refute or refine away the force of those original principles of the reformation which are laid down at the very entrance of the *Confessional*, as follows.

“ JESUS CHRIST hath by his Gospel called  
 “ all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty  
 “ of the sons of God, and restored them to  
 “ the priviledge of working out their own salvation by their own understandings and endeavours. For this work of salvation sufficient means are afforded in the holy Scriptures, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men. In these Scriptures all things needful for spiritual living and man’s souls health are mentioned and shewed. Consequently, faith and conscience, having no dependance upon man’s laws are not to be compelled by man’s Authority; and none other hath the Church of *Rome* to shew for the spiritual dominion she claimeth. The Church of Christ is congregated.

(a) Second Letter, p. 2.



“ gregated by the word of God, and not by  
 “ man’s law ; nor are the King’s laws any  
 “ farther to be obeyed, than they agree with  
 “ the law of God (a).”

ON such principles as these, it was alledged,  
 the protestants first withdrew from the com-  
 munion of the Church of Rome. And they  
 are principles so evidently *scriptural* that I  
 should be unhappy to think it possible to be  
 proved that they are not also *protestant* prin-  
 ciples ; nor is it without regret, that I see you  
 labouring, by distinctions and refinements hither-  
 to unthought of, to represent them as being in  
 contrast with the known principles of the first  
 Reformers. But if you have proved it, and if  
 the contrast be just, we must submit however  
 reluctantly.—Let us examine what success at-  
 tends this extraordinary and very creditable at-  
 tempt.

JESUS CHRIST *bath, by his Gospel, called*  
*all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty of the*  
*sons of God (b).* To this you say, “ I no  
 “ where

(a) Confessional, p. 1. 2.

(b) Ibid, p. 1.

“ where find, that the first protestants under-  
 “ stood this *glorious liberty* to mean a dis-  
 “ charge from all human authority in mat-  
 “ ters of religion (a) :” And you cite Luther  
 and Calvin, and the example of our own  
 Church to prove “ the consent of the chief  
 “ protestant Churches, that the Gospel liberty  
 “ did not set us loose from all human authori-  
 “ ty in matters of religion (b).”

THE first thing necessary to be attended to  
 here is, in what sense you are to be understood  
 in speaking of *matters in religion*. If you  
 mean such matters as are purely of a spiritual  
 nature, *viz.* faith, conscience and the salvation  
 of a man’s soul, you use the expression in the  
 sense, in which the question is concerned. If  
 you mean matters of another sort, I would  
 leave you to dispute with those who, think-  
 ing more freely than yourself on the subject,  
 but unhappily associating with the idea of re-  
 ligion what doth not belong to it, may chuse  
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(a) Second Letter, p. 2.

(b) *ibid*, p. 4



to engage with you, and over such indeed to gain an easy victory.

THE next thing, which it may be proper to take notice of, is the light in which you have placed this passage from the *Confessional*. “ I  
 “ no where find, say you, that the first pro-  
 “ testants understood this glorious liberty to  
 “ mean a discharge *from all human authority*  
 “ *in matters of religion.* ” But the author of  
 the *Confessional* doth not say here, “ that this  
 “ glorious liberty consists in a discharge from  
 “ all human authority in matters of religion.”  
 but that, “ Jesus Christ hath called all men  
 “ to the glorious liberty of the sons of God  
 “ and restored them to the priviledge, of  
 “ *working out their own salvation by their own*  
 “ *understandings and endeavours.* ”

Now, though it may be true, that this  
 priviledge necessarily implies a discharge from  
 all human authority in matters of religion, yet  
 surely it would have been more accurate in  
 you, and more fair, to have quoted the sen-  
 tence entire and not have split it, as you have  
 done, the more commodiously to pass your own

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comment upon the words and, from the ambiguity of your own expression, to take an handle of dispute, which the sentence, viewed in its proper form, did not seem to afford. For, as it stands in the *Confessional*, it doth not express *two* distinct principles of the first reformers; nor would any one, not misled by your management of the matter, have so understood it. It consists of two members, in the latter of which is particularly specified a certain protestant principle founded in that glorious liberty which is mentioned in the former.

SINCE, therefore, you chose to contest this principle with the Author, of the *Confessional*, it certainly became you to have had more regard to the turn of the sentence, as well in justice to the question (which would thereby have been kept freer from ambiguity) as in justice to the Writer whom you attack. On both accounts, instead of saying, you “ no where  
“ find, that the first protestants understood this  
“ glorious liberty to mean a discharge *from all*  
*human*



"*authority in matters of religion*," (which the author of the *Confessional* hath not here expressly asserted) your objection had been more properly stated by denying, that the first protestants understood this liberty to imply (what is here expressly asserted) that "all men are restored to the privilege of working out their own salvation by their own understandings and endeavours."

HOWEVER, having settled what we are to understand by *matters in religion*, if we would keep to the point in question, let us try the force of your objection (as stated by yourself) to admitting this for an original principle of the reformation.

You nowhere find that the first protestants held this principle (a): On the contrary, you would persuade us that "the chief protestant churches consent, that the Gospel-liberty did not set us loose from all human authority in matters of religion (b).

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(a) Second Letter, p. 2.

(b) *ibid*, p. 4.

Let me ask you then ; Do they consent that we remain in bondage to *some* human authority in matters of religion ?—Will you maintain that they are agreed in this, that Jesus Christ hath, in matters of religion, set us free *but in part* ?—That in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, a man's own conscience and the salvation of his soul (for with such things only is religion concerned) we are not subject to the authority of Christ *alone* ?—If they do not consent that this is the case, then they do not deny that we are, by the Gospel of Christ, *fully*, and *completely*, and not *in part only*, discharged from human authority in matters of religion, and therein bound only by the word of God. It might suffice, therefore, to answer you much in your own way, *viz.* I nowhere find that the first protestants, when they complained, that “ many persons misrepresented “ this christian liberty, as if all obedience to “ men was taken away by it,” meant to make any exception to the claim of an independency on all human authority in matters of religion.

BUT,



BUT, for the sake of truth and in justice to the first Reformers, whose religious sentiments appear not, under your construction of the passages extracted from them, in the most favourable light, what you have adduced shall be particularly considered.

THIS principle, then, of an independency on all human authority in matters of religion, is confronted with the authority of Luther, who, in his treatise on *Christian liberty*, observes that, “ there are many who abuse this  
“ liberty, thinking they are hereby discharged  
“ from all restraint, and assert their Christian  
“ freedom in nothing but in their contempt  
“ of human ceremonies and ordinances (a).”

Now, whatever Luther's private sentiments of the lawfulness or the expediency of externals

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(a) Second Letter, p. 2.—Sunt quam plurimi, qui hanc libertatem fidei audientes, mox eam in occasionem carnis vertant, omnia sibi statim licere arbitantes, nec aliâ re ullâ liberi et Christiani videri volentes, quam contemptu et reprehensione ceremoniarum, traditionum, legum humanarum.

in religion might be, I am sure he doth not, in this passage, assert or intimate any thing inconsistent with an entire freedom from restraint of human authority in matters of religion. For whom doth he blame here?—Or what doth he find fault with?—He doth not blame any persons for steadily asserting their *Christian liberty* in its utmost extent, against *human authority*, but for abusing it to the purpose of *sin* and their *sensual lusts*, in *occasionem carnis*; thinking, that they might follow their own *Inclinations without controul*, and do whatever they pleased, *omnia sibi statim licere arbitrantur*.

THIS was a very different thing from asserting that they were, by the Gospel constitution; discharged from all human authority in matters of religion: And their blame lay not in refusing to submit therein to *man's law*, but in casting off the restraints which reason and the *Divine law* laid them under, the restraint of conscience and the authority of God and their Redeemer; by whom they were *called not unto uncleanness*,  
but



*but unto holiness, and through whom they had*  
 obtained, not a freedom and discharge from  
 all human authority, respecting their civil and  
 temporal concerns, but a much more *glorious*  
*liberty* and privilege, even that of being the  
*Sons of God*, free subjects in their Father's  
 kingdom, where none have authority over them,  
 but God and Christ. In *this kingdom*, subjec-  
 tion to human authority should have no place.  
*Here* one is not bond and another free. Some  
 are not kings and others subjects. *Here* Cæsar  
 hath no claim upon us, all things *herein* being  
 God's, and we ourselves being through Jesus  
 Christ become his sons, are brethren together  
 and not subject one to another. *Here* we can  
 owe nothing to any man, but that which is  
 the most free and unconstrained thing in nature  
*viz.* to love one another : And even this is due  
 from us, not as a debt to men, but to Christ,  
 who hath loved us and purchased this our obe-  
 dience to himself. In things appertaining to  
 this life and the kingdoms of this world, there  
 are many that may justly exercise authority  
 over us ; whether they be called kings, prin-  
 ces, bishops, or masters. But unto us, as  
 Christians,

Christians, there is but one Lord and Master, and one only Bishop of our souls, even Christ Jesus.

BUT doth not Luther, it may be said, in condemning, in this passage, the contempt of human ceremonies and ordinances, condemn the disavowal of all human authority in matters of religion?—By no means—To condemn human ceremonies and ordinances is one thing; and to disclaim human authority, in matters of religion, is another. A man may with a free conscience observe the former, who cannot in conscience submit to the latter. A Lutheran may approve of much form in the public worship of God: A Calvinist, of but little; while both may retain this original principle of the reformation, *viz.* That a Christian man is not subject to human authority in matters of religion: Or, (to remind you here of the propriety with which this is expressed in the *Confessional*) that each should have the liberty, and enjoy the privilege, to which the Gospel hath restored



restored him, of *working out his own salvation in his own way.*

BUT let us attend a little more accurately, than you seem to have done, to this passage, as it is in the original. “And assert their *Christian freedom* (as you translate it) in nothing, “but in their contempt of human ceremonies “and ordinances.” The words are (a) *nec aliâ re ullâ liberi et Christiani videri volentes, quam contemptu et reprehensione ceremoniarum, traditionum, legum humanarum,* “desirous of “being thought *free men* and Christians in no- “thing but, &c.” By which it should seem, that their conduct and sentiments here reproved have respect to *civil* as well as religious matters. They were for *Liberty*, as well as for Christianity: And, as they asserted the former in madly rejecting all restraint of *human laws*, *legum humanarum*; so they expressed their zeal for the latter in *nothing but* in their contempt of ceremonies and ordinances. They are not, therefore, complained of here for re-  
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(a) Not having the books referred to in your performance at hand, the words are given from your own quotation.

refusing to submit to human ordinances imposed upon them as *matters of religion*, that is, as needful for *spiritual living and man's soul's health*. To reject human authority in such a case might, for any thing here said, be in Luther's judgment not only justifiable but their duty. But they are reproved for supposing, that their Christian freedom consisted only in a wanton contempt of all form and ceremony, and even human laws, and for neglecting to assert it in its most undoubted and essential points. They could live, it seems, slaves to their lusts, submit to the tyranny of their own passions and the dominion of sin and sense, while they could not brook the least restraint from their Civil, or reproof from their Ecclesiastical, governors; nor would voluntarily submit to them in any thing how innocent soever, for the sake of the quiet and peace of society, or in condescension to their Christian brethren.

It is farther to be observed, that the rude and indecent manner, in which these sticklers for freedom took upon them to carp at every human



human ceremony and ordinance, is marked by these words, *contemptu et reprehensione*, contempt and *reprehension* thereof. We have some such at this day, who, not content under the best of human governments with the quiet enjoyment of their own priviledged way of worshipping God, are for ever judging and rashly condemning that of their fellow-christians, and them as *superstitious* in their compliance with certain forms, or *hypocritical* in their profession of faith, in certain points. Such persons may be right in their judgement, that the forms which they condemn are no way way edifying, nor essential to salvation, and they are *certainly* right, if they so judge, in not complying with any human authority enjoining them, as *such*. But they are not to be justified in forwardly finding fault with their fellow-christians for their infirmities and weakneses in this respect, in petulantly and dogmatically condemning every established mode, which is not to their own liking, and disseminating their illiberal suspicions of the insincerity of all those, who profess to believe certain articles to which they

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themselves cannot yield assent; pluming themselves all the while on the title of *assertors of religious liberty*, which they assert in nothing but in the indecent freedoms they take with their superiors, and in unfriendly, unchristian, and ill-timed reflections on those from whom they differ.

Such kind of behaviour might very consistently be reproved by Luther, without supposing him to insinuate, that the gospel hath left us in subjection to any human authority in matters of religion. For "the free Christian, " he tells us, doth not observe human injunctions, as necessary to salvation, but only *out of respect* to his Ecclesiastical governours, the society of which he is a member, and the magistrate under whom he lives, or, as an example to his neighbour (a)." — By observing human

(a) Second Letter, p. 2.

Christianus enim liber sic dicet: Ego jejunabo, orabo, hoc et hoc faciam, quod per homines mandatum est; non quod illo mihi sit opus *ad justitiam* aut *salutem*, sed quod in hoc *morem geram* papæ, episcopo, communitati illi, et illi magistratui, aut proximo meo ad exemplum faciam.



human institutions on this principle, he doth not submit to any restraint of human authority in matters of religion ; but sheweth, however, his readiness to communicate with his fellow-christians, where he can do it conscientiously, and expresseth his deference to public authority in things, which are not to *him* matters of religion, affecting not his faith, nor offending his conscience.

THE next authority brought to confront the principle in question is Calvin, who, in his *Institutions*, complains, “ that seditious men and  
“ cavillers misrepresent this liberty, as if all obedience to men was taken away by it.  
“ But he subjects us,” you tell us, “ both to  
“ their political and *spiritual* government (*a*).”

How you may understand the word, *spiritual*, in this place, is not quite clear : But, according to what hath been observed above, (*b*) if you do not mean to assert, that Calvin subjects us to human authority in matters of religion, that

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(*a*) Second Letter, p. 3.

(*b*) Vide *supra*, p. 6, 7.

is, in which faith, conscience, and the salvation of a man's soul are concerned, you mean to argue for what is not relative to the question. Let us not, then, be imposed upon by a word, but examine, whether your quotation from this reformer proves his consent, that Christians are not by the Gospel liberty discharged from all restraint of human authority in the matter of *religion*.

“ THE first [political government] is the appointment of God ; the latter” [spiritual government] he says, according to your representation of the matter, “ also must be obeyed  
 “ in it's external discipline and ceremonies,  
 “ founded on that general scripture rule, *let all*  
 “ *things be done decently and in order* ; which  
 “ discipline is alterable according to the circumstances of times and places. Now it is the  
 “ duty of Christian people, says he, to keep  
 “ human constitutions framed according to this  
 “ rule, with a free conscience indeed, and  
 “ without superstition, yet with a pious readiness to obey : Not to despise them, not to  
 “ pass them over with a careless negligence ;  
 much



“ much less ought they by pride and obstinacy  
 “ openly to break them (a).”

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(a) 2d Letter, p. 3.

Statim enim atque de humanarum constitutionum abrogatione verbum factum est, ingentes turbæ partim à seditiosis, partim à calumniatoribus, commoventur: quasi universa simul tollatur ac subvertatur hominum obedientia. Lib. III. cap. XIX. §. 14. Primum advertamus duplex esse in homine regimen: alterum spirituale.—alterum politicum. §. 15.—Magistratum functionem non modo sibi probari acceptamque esse testatus est Dominus: sed honorificentissimis insuper elogiis ejus dignitatem profequutus mirificè nobis commendavit. Lib. IV. cap. XX. §. 4.

Eas demum humanas constitutiones me probare quæ et Dei autoritate fundatæ, et ex scriptura desumptæ, adeoque prorsus divinæ sunt—quia autem in externâ disciplinâ et cœremoniis non voluit (Dominus) figillatim præscribere quid sequi debeamus, (quòd istud pendere a temporum conditione prævideret, neque judicaret unam seculis omnibus formam convenire) confugere hîc oportet ad generales quas dedit regulas, ut ad eas exigantur quæcunque ad ordinem et decorum præcipi necessitas ecclesiæ postulabit. Lib. IV. cap. X. §. 30.—Jam vero Christiani populi officium est, quæ secundum hunc canonem fuerint instituta, liberâ quidem conscientia, nullâque superstitione, piâ tamen et facili ad obsequendum propensione servare, non contemptim habere, non supinâ negligentia præterire: tantum abest ut per fastum et contumaciam violare apertè debeat. §. 31.

SUCH is the authority you produce to shew, that protestants may, consistently with their original principles of reformation, claim a right of restraining their brethren, or think themselves bound to submit to human restraints, in matters of religion. But doth this passage, (even in the view you have given us of it) warrant us to conclude, that this was Calvin's sentiment?—Much more justly, and more honourably for the cause of reformation, might we infer, I should think, the very reverse, *viz.* that he would have all Christians, both people and governours, in matters of religion, make the word of God their only rule of judging and acting; the former not being bound to submit herein to the commandments of men, nor the latter lawfully requiring submission to their own or any other mere human authority whatsoever. For, if it be the duty of Christian people, as is here said, to keep human constitutions with a free conscience, and without superstition, then, in Calvin's opinion, they are not only at liberty, but it is even their duty, to refuse submission to human authority in such matters as we are speaking

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ing of. Because their consciences would, through such submission, suffer restraint, which Calvin is for leaving free. And, whereas it is added, *without superstition*, it is from thence most evident, that, in his judgement, mere human constitutions are unwarrantably imposed upon Christians, as matters of religion. For how could the people, whom he cautions against a *superstitious* observance of them, observe them *without superstition*, if they acknowledged and submitted to the authority which imposed them as such. Seeing it is *superstition* to entertain a *religious* regard and veneration for those things, which are not the proper objects thereof; being only of *human* origin and appointment.

WHAT then, you may ask, is no regard due to external discipline, when it is framed on decent and orderly constitutions? — Yes surely: It is the duty of Christian people “not to despise *such*, not to pass such constitutions over “with a careless negligence: Much less ought “they by pride and obstinacy openly to break “them.” But, is it contempt of decency? —

Or,

Or should it be termed, *pride* and *obstinacy*, to refuse submission, which is apprehended neither to be due, nor even lawful?—To reject what cannot in conscience be complied with?—Or, on which side doth the pride and obstinacy in this case lye?—On the side of the Imposer, or that of the Recusant?—With him, who authoritatively requires submission, or with him, who conscientiously refuseth it?—With the former, I should think.

BUT, though this quotation, viewed in its general drift, cannot be considered as any way applicable to your purpose, yet the turn given to one part of it may mislead the mere English reader, and those who may be disposed to take your representation, without attending to the import, of the original. For you represent Calvin as asserting, “that the spiritual government of men *must be obeyed* in its external discipline and ceremonies, founded on that general scripture rule, *Let all things be done decently and in order.*”—Now, what Calvin observes is, that, “as to external discipline and cere-



“ceremonies, seeing that Christ hath not left  
 “*particular* and special directions concerning  
 “them, *we should have recourse*, (*confugere*  
 “*hic oportet*) for the decent and orderly settle-  
 “ment thereof, to those *general* rules which he  
 “hath given (a).” This is no more than a re-  
 commendation to the Church, or, if you will,  
 to Church-governours, to take care, that the  
 external discipline and ceremonies be no way  
 repugnant to scripture authority. This is not  
 to assert (as you would represent it) the necessity  
 of obedience to the *spiritual* government of  
 men in its discipline, &c : Nor is there a word  
 about *subjecting* Christians, in matters of religion,  
 to *human* authority. On the contrary, Christians  
 are cautioned by this primitive reformer, while  
 they would provide for order and decency, not

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(a) Quia autem in externâ disciplinâ et cæremoniis non voluit  
 (Dominus) figillatim præscribere quid sequi debeamus, (quod  
 istud pendere à temporum conditione prævideret, neque judicaret  
 unam seculis omnibus formam convenire) *confugere hic oportet* ad  
 generales quas dedit regulas, ut ad eas exigantur quæcunque ad  
 ordinem et decorum præcipi necessitas ecclesiæ postulabit,  
 2d Letter, p. 3, 4.

to transgress the general rules and principles of scripture, but even in this matter (wherein they might think their own judgement sufficient) to consult and abide by *them*.

AND, yet what a different air doth your construction of this passage carry with it!—One would imagine, that Calvin's design was to enforce upon the people the duty of *obedience* and *submission* to their spiritual governours, instead of admonishing Christians, and Church-governors in particular, to be guided, in the settlement of external discipline, by the general directions of scripture. "The spiritual government of men *must be obeyed*." So you express it; and so *you* may think. But this is not Calvin's sentiment in this place: Nor hath he delivered himself in any such dictatorial strain. How came you then to give this turn to his words?—This is best known to yourself. But that it hath been done with design, must be evident enough to those, who understand, and attend to, the quotation in the original; and who make no doubt of its having been understood by  
yourself.



yourself.—And thus much for “ Calvin’s sub-  
 “ jecting us both to the political and spiritual  
 “ government of men.”

THE last authority with which you confront  
 this principle, of *the Independence of every Chris-  
 tian man on all human authority in matters of  
 religion*, is the example of the Church of Eng-  
 land herself.—“ Our own Church, it is well  
 “ known,” you say, “ when she asserted her li-  
 “ berty against the usurpations and tyranny of  
 “ Rome, submitted herself, in externals, to the  
 “ supremacy of her chief Magistrate (a), whom  
 “ the nation, by common consent in parlia-  
 “ ment, restored to all such jurisdictions, pri-  
 “ viledges, superiorities, and preeminences, spiri-  
 “ tual or ecclesiastical, as by any ecclesiastical  
 “ power or authority formerly had been, or might  
 “ be lawfully exercised for visitation of the eccle-  
 “ siastical state and persons, and for reformation,  
 “ order, and correction of the same and all man-  
 “ ner of errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, offences,  
 “ contempts and enormities (b).”—Our own

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(a) 3d Letter, p. 3.

(b) 1 mo. Elis.

Church, it is well known, Sir, when she asserted her liberty against the usurpations and tyranny of *Rome*, did *not* submit herself, in *matters of religion*, to any human power whatsoever. The Church of *England* asserted her right *then*, claims it *now*, and God long preserve to her this glorious liberty and privilege, of judging for herself in *matters of religion*. As in *these* she claims no authority over any *other* Church, so she neither hath submitted, nor could consistently with her original principles, on which she asserted her liberty against the authority of the Church of *Rome*, submit to any human restraint over Herself.

YES: "In externals (*a*)," you say, "she submitted Herself to the supremacy of her chief

(*a*) I beg to refer our readers again to what has been premised above at page 6, 7. in order to prevent as much as possible confusion arising to the subject from the ambiguity of your expressions. You have undertaken to prove the "consent of the chief protestant churches, that the Gospel liberty did not set us loose from all human authority in *matters of religion*." What is to be understood by *matters of religion* has been fixed at the above-mentioned pages. But you have here again changed the expression,



“chief magistrate.”—You may name it, *Submission*, if you please, or what else you please : But it certainly was to prevent, for the future, all restraint of human authority over Her, in religion, that the measure you refer to, was taken. And you must have a very confused notion of the King’s supremacy, to suppose that it subjects the Church of *England* to any degree of restraint, touching religion, which can be applied in support of your argument. The King’s supremacy is necessarily involved in the *constitution* of the Church of *England*. It became, by common consent of the nation in parliament, an essential part of her frame, and is as inseparable from the idea of the Church of *England*, as the Head, Heart, or any other  
essential

pression, bringing an instance of submission to human authority, *in externals*, to prove the duty of submission to human authority *in matters of religion*. Is not this very great inaccuracy, and what you ought to be ashamed of in the discussion of such an important question, though we should have the candour to believe the confusion occasioned by it to have been undesigned?—For can matters that are *external to*, be considered as matters of *religion*?—And yet we must in order to allow you some consistency of argument from the instance of submission you have brought, suppose that you affix the same idea to both expressions.

essential part of the human frame, is inseparable from the idea of the Man himself. To what power or authority, then, is the Church of *England*, considered in this union of its parts, as one system, constitution, or persona, subjected? —To no power *upon earth*: Neither is she accountable to any for her conduct and sentiments in religion, but to God her judge. For unto his Word alone, and no other authority, doth She profess to have made submission.

How far indeed the Members, of which the Church of *England* is composed, enjoy, in their present subordination and mutual dependence on each other, the liberty needful for their respective health and soundness, whereby each and the whole may move in a Gospel direction, is another matter, and more closely connected with the question, than you seem to be aware of, or chuse to acknowledge and keep in sight. However, as you have appealed to the example of Our church, I will venture to affirm, that each member doth enjoy the perfect liberty of the Gospel independently on all human authority, if they judge and act,  
each



each man for *himself*, as fully as the Church of *England* did for *Herself*, when she separated from the church of *Rome*. For, dispute as long as you please, nothing can be more evident than that the principle She went upon, in that instance, was this glorious one, *viz.* That She had a right, founded in the Gospel of Christ, of acting and judging for *Herself*, in matters of religion, independently on human authority.

AND thus we have detected the sophism in your argument, for the exercise of human authority in matters of religion, and the duty of submitting to it, from the conduct of the Church of *England* in this instance. The King is the head of the Church of *England*; therefore the Church of *England* is not free from restraint of human authority: which is, as if one should affirm, that a man is not at his own liberty, but under restraint from another person; because the body has a necessary dependence on the head. But this pitiful manner of sophisticating the argument, not only  
shews

shews you to be hard put to it to maintain your position with any degree of plausibility, but leaves the Church of *England* under a reflection, which none will thank you for, but those who take a pleasure in hearing her traduced.

“ ANOTHER (a) protestant principle the author of the *Confessional* represents to be, (I use here your own words) a being *restored to the privilege of working out their own salvation, by their own understanding and endeavours.* And for this work of salvation sufficient means are afforded in the holy scriptures, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men (b).” On this you observe ;—  
 “ That no man hath authority to make new articles of faith unknown to scripture, and to bind them upon us as necessary terms of salvation, is true ; and was the very point on which the protestants broke with the Church of Rome (c).”

WHAT

(a) Vide supra, p. 7, 8.

(b) 2d Letter, p. 4. Conf. p. 1.

(c) Ibid.



WHAT then is your quarrel with the author of the *Confessional*?—Are you not both agreed, that the doctrines and commandments of men are not to be established?—So one would imagine by your concession. But, though you can find nothing in the principle itself, nor even in the manner in which it is expressed, to countenance a direct objection to it, yet your own mere suspicion, it seems, affords you an occasion of displaying your censoriousness in quibbling about it. You suspect, “that by specifying  
 “ as a principle of the *first* protestants, what  
 “ is a principle of *all* protestants *now*, the  
 “ author of the *Confessional* would represent the  
 “ reformers as renouncing all regard and defer-  
 “ ence to the doctrine and judgement of the  
 “ Christian church and its ministers (a).”—For shame, Sir!—Do not you yourself represent it as a principle of the *first* reformers?—Do not you tell us, “it was the very point on which  
 “ the protestants *broke* with the Church of  
 “ *Rome*?”—Might we not then, if we would give way to suspicion, entertain the same suspi-  
 F cion,

(a) 2d Letter, p. 4, 5.

cion against yourself?—But away with suspicions. You have no ground for your's. The insinuation is unfair and ungenerous. Besides this, it is nothing to the point in question.

THIS principle, *that the holy scriptures are, for the work of salvation, sufficient, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men*, is assumed as one of the principles of the *first* reformers, on which they withdrew from the communion of the Church of *Rome*. Is it justly assumed as such, or not?—If it be; then you have only to disprove the consequence drawn from it, respecting the establishment of confessions. But, if you concede to the first, and have not been able to disprove the last, then your argument for subscription to established articles and confessions of faith fails in this instance.

Now, there will be no occasion to enter into a minute examination of what you  
have



have adduced to shew the sentiments of Luther (a), Calvin (b), and our own Church

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on

(a) 2d Letter, p. 5.

Ad docendum verbum Dei et ad administranda sacramenta certos viros constitui debere. Vide Seckend. Lib. i. sect. 45. §. ciii. p. 170.

— Neminem quidem ad fidem cogi debere, attamen plebem rudem notitiâ necessariâ religionis imbuendam esse. In præfationem (ad catechismum) plebis ignorantiam deplorat, et episcopos acriter increpat, quod institutionem catechetica neglexerint. Lib. ii. sect. 17, §. LI. p. 145, A. D. 1529.

— Videndum est igitur, utra interpretatio, nostra an contraria, congruat cum fontibus, hoc est, cum scriptis prophetis et apostolicis, symbolis, et certis testimoniis apostolicæ sententiæ. Lib. iii. sect. 33. §. 130. p. 609. A. D. 1546.

(b) 2d Letter, p. 6.

Scribit Paulus Christum, ut impleret omnia, dedisse alios quidem apostolos, &c. Videmus ut Deus qui posset momento suos perficere, nolit tamen eos adolescere in virilem ætatem nisi educatione ecclesiæ. Videmus modum exprimi: quia pastoribus injuncta est cælestis doctrinæ prædicatio. Videmus omnes ad unum cogi in eundem ordinem, ut mansueto et docili spiritu regendos se doctoribus in hunc usum creatis permittant.—Sicut olim non contentus fuit solâ lege sed sacerdotes addidit interpretes, ex quorum labiis populus inquireret verum illius sensum: ita hodiè, non tantum vult nos esse lectioni attentos, sed magistros etiam præficit, quorum operâ adjuvemur—Etsi externis mediis allagata

non

(c), on this head. To shorten the matter, I shall give you credit, for all that you say, is proved out of them.

HAVING produced your authorities, you thus proceed to apply them to your purpose.—Thus we see, according to these three principal  
 “ roots of protestantism, the holy scriptures  
 “ do not afford sufficient means for the work  
 “ of salvation, without having recourse to the  
 “ doctrines

non est Dei virtus, nos tamen ordinario docendi modo alligavit: quem dum recusant tenere fanatici homines, multis se exitiis laqueis involvunt. Multos impellit vel superbia, vel fastidium, vel æmulatio, ut sibi persuadeant privatim legendo et meditando se posse satis proficere, atque ita contemnunt publicos cœtus, et prædicationem supervacuam ducant. Quoniam autem sacrum unitatis vinculum quantum in se est volvunt vel abrumpunt, nemo justam impii hujus divortii pœnam effugit, quin se pestiferis erroribus ac teterrimis deliriis fascinet. *Calvini Institut. lib. iv. cap. i. § 5.*

(c) Nam hi sunt [de episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris ecclesiæ loquitur] spirituales patres, quorum operâ per evangelium populus Deo generatur. Et hi curam animarum susceperunt, atque à Deo constituti sunt, ut divina sacramenta exhibeant, populumque verbi doctrinâ pascant.—— Pia et catholica Christiani hominis Institutio, ad quintum præceptum decalogi.



“doctrines and commandments of men, *in a proper sense*, though not *in that* which our Saviour condemns.” Dear heart, Sir! What a slender thread is this to suspend the weighty cause of established confessions by!

HOWEVER, to have recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men, *in the sense* which our Saviour condemns, is, by your own confession, unnecessary for the work of salvation; the holy scriptures affording sufficient means without it. And, I beseech you, Sir, may we not suppose, that the author of the *Confessional* understood it *in that sense*, which our Saviour condemns?—Is it consistent with candour, nay, with common justice, or even common sense, to believe that, in pleading for the sufficiency of *scripture*-doctrines and commandments for salvation, without having recourse to *human* doctrines and commandments, he meant (as you would insinuate by your quotations) to preclude the lawfulness, and expediency, or even the necessity of public instruction; of ministering, or attending upon the ministry;

ministry ; of explaining the scriptures to the unlearned and ignorant, or availing ourselves of the learned interpretations of any men, or body of men, for the furtherance of our knowledge therein?—I must own, Sir, I can hardly think you sincere in professing to entertain the the suspicion, that this might be his meaning ; And I dare venture to say, that of all his readers you stand single in this construction of his words.

BUT, to support your singular assertion, in the name of the *first* protestants, “ *that the holy scriptures do not, in a proper sense, afford sufficient means for the work of salvation, without having recourse to the commandments of MEN,*” you thus labour to distinguish. “ They are indeed originally the doctrines and commandments of Christ, and are to be received as such ; but they are to be made known, explained, and enforced by the ministry of men.” How would you distinguish here?—Or, what use would you make of the Distinction, if we should allow it to have a *difference ?*



*difference?*—"The holy scriptures, you say,  
 "are indeed *originally* the doctrines and com-  
 "mandments of *Christ*; but—what?—They  
 "are to be made known, explained, and en-  
 "forced by the ministry of *men*."—Well, and  
 what then?—Are they not still the doctrines  
 and commandments of *Christ*?—After they are  
 made known, explained, and enforced by the  
 ministry of *men*, are they become what they  
 were not *originally*, the doctrines and com-  
 mandments of *men*?—Or, do you mean, that  
 they are *now* to be received *as such*, though  
*originally* they are the doctrines and command-  
 ments of *Christ*?—Or, lastly (for I know not  
 what farther to suppose may be your meaning)  
 would you be understood to say, that the doc-  
 trines and commandments of *Christ* are to be  
 made known, and explained by *human* doctrines,  
 and to be enforced by *human* commandments?  
 —Mean what you may, this is certain, that the  
 holy scriptures are *now*, as well as *originally*,  
 the doctrines and commandments of *Christ*,  
 and to be received *as such*; and that all *hu-*  
*man* explications, glosses, and interpretations,  
 under

under whatever form appearing, are *not* the doctrines and commandments of *Christ*, nor, by whatever sanctions enforced, to be received as such.

WHEN all things that Christ commanded were committed to writing, it is truly enough observed, that interpreters would be necessary to those who were strangers to the language in which they were first written; and when translated, expositors would be necessary to such as are not sufficiently acquainted with figures in writing, the customs and histories referred to, and the agreement or analogy of scripture. (a) But this is far from demonstrating the necessity of having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men, by way of supplying the deficiency of scripture-means for the work of salvation; and from proving, that the first protestants in separating from the church of *Rome*, did not proceed upon some such principle as this, *viz.* That there was no necessity for *having recourse to the doctrines and commandments*

(a) 2d Letter. p. 7, 8.



*ments of men; consequently, no necessity for having any longer recourse to those of the church of Rome, sufficient means, for the work of salvation, being afforded in the holy scriptures without it.*

*IN these scriptures, proceeds the author of the Confessional, all things needful for spiritual living and man's soul's health are mentioned and shewed: Consequently, faith and conscience, having no dependence upon man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's authority; and none other hath the church of Rome to shew for the spiritual dominion she claimeth. (a)*

*YOUR answer to this is most extraordinary.*

*"I fear, say you, your doctrine, that every  
"man has a right to interpret what is needful  
"for man's soul's health, without any depen-  
"dence on other men's assistance for the direc-  
"tion of his faith and conscience, will justify  
"the church of Rome in her claim of spiritual  
"dominion, which she pretends to derive  
"from scripture." (b)* A more preposterous

*G conclusion*

*(a) Conf. p. 1, 2.*

*(b) 2d Letter, p. 8.*

conclusion was never drawn; nor the fear of any thing more absurdly entertained. If indeed some men have a right to interpret what is needful for *other* men's soul's health; this might go far towards justifying the Church of *Rome* in her claim. But if, on the other hand, every man has a right to interpret what is needful for *his own* soul's health, without depending on other men for the direction of his faith and conscience, how doth this tend to justify the Church of *Rome* in subjecting Christians to a dependence upon her laws, for the direction of their faith and consciences?—This principle of an independence on all human authority, in matters of faith and conscience, strikes at the root of her spiritual dominion; and she has given us too plain proofs of a consistency in her measures, for us to suppose that she will ever add to her insolence and tyranny, the egregious folly of attempting to justify them on the principle of a right to private judgement.—But this is too plain to need farther insisting upon. Let us see if you have not something more plausible to urge in favour of restraining faith and



and conscience, and making them in some measure dependent upon man's laws.

"THE protestants, you alledge, did not lay it down as a principle, that human authority was not to be admitted as a guide to understand the scriptures, and so remotely to influence faith and conscience." (a)

THIS, Sir, is a direct attempt to impose upon your readers by a substitution of terms. The human authority, which the first reformers are asserted to have disclaimed, is an authority that would *compel* faith and conscience, as if they were dependent upon man's *laws*. Instead of which you substitute an authority, which is only to be a *guide to understand* the scriptures, and so *remotely to influence* faith and conscience; and then set yourself to prove, by the three fore-cited vouchers, that the first reformers admitted of human authority in the vague sense in which you contend for it.

BUT we must not allow you thus to prove at your own rate. The question is not, as you

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would

(a) 2d Letter, p. 8.

would suggest the state of it to be, whether Christian men may not lawfully undertake to explain the scriptures and assist each other in the knowledge of them, and *so* remotely influence faith and conscience: But, whether faith and conscience are dependent upon *man's laws*, and not intirely upon the law of God; and whether they are to be compelled by man's authority.

Now, that they are dependent upon the law of God and not on the laws of man, and are not to be compelled by man's authority, but are to be ascertained and informed out of the scriptures; will appear to be a principle of the first reformers, from those very quotations which you have produced in opposition to this principle. For Luther, as Seckendorf relates, taught, that “doctrines necessary to salvation  
 “should be certain and determinate *out of the*  
 “*scriptures*; so that every heretical sense erroneously introduced may be confuted *by scripture itself*, as oft as men of learning and piety, laying aside prejudice, and imploring the  
 divine



“divine assistance, compare and weigh the  
 “passages.” (a) Here, you see, this reformer in-  
 sists upon the *scriptures*, the law of God *alone*,  
 being appealed to for the ascertaining and deter-  
 mining of man’s faith. And so far is he from  
 subjecting it to a dependence upon man’s law,  
 and to the compulsion of human authority, that  
 he is for trying *human* determinations, *man’s*  
 law, by the *scriptures*, the *divine* law.

BUT “they likewise, you say, in their pro-  
 “testation in the colloquy at *Ratisbone*, defer  
 “to the three creeds, of the Apostles, *Nice*,  
 “and *Athanasius*.” (b)—With good reason;,  
 these being, in their judgement, and the  
 judgement of their enemies, “epitomes or  
 “summaries of the *Gospel*,—to the four first  
 general

(a) 2d Letter, page 8, 9.

Verissimum enim est quod vir summus hic inculcat, dogmata,  
 quæ ad salutem necessaria sunt, ex scripturis sacris certa esse de-  
 bere, ita quidem, ut hereticus sensus, scripturæ per errorem illatus,  
 ex ipsa scriptura confutari possit et debeat, quotiescunque pii doc-  
 tores, positis prejudiciis, et invocato Dei auxilio, dicta conferunt  
 et examinant. Lib. iii. sect. 7. §. xx. p. 54.

(b) 2d Letter, p. 9.

“ general councils, and others.”—But, how far, let me ask you, did they defer (as you express it) to these?—Why, “ so far as their decrees are confirmed *by scripture*—and, to the “ antient ecclesiastical writers.” — I ask again, how far did they defer to these?—Why, just “ *so far*, it appears by your own account, as “ they themselves desire to be received, which “ is, *no further* than they produce the testimony of *scripture*.” (a)

THIS is your own representation of the conduct of the first protestants, as you have extracted and rendered it from Seckendorf. Let the reader now judge, whether these passages might not have been brought in defence of the author of

(a) 2d Letter, p. 9.

Secundo, amplectimur quoque, tanquam scripturæ propheticae ac apostolicae epitomen seu summam, symbola tria, ut apostolorum, Nicenum, et Athanasianum. Tertio, amplectimur item quatuor magna concilia, Nicenum, Constantinopolitanum, Ephesinum, et Chalcedonense, et alia, quatenus quidem eum sacrâ scripturâ conveniunt, et quorum dogmata et decreta scripturis sacris confirmata sunt. Quarto, agnoscimus scriptores veteres ecclesiasticos, sed quatenus ipsi agnosci et legi volunt, et sententia eorum testimonium habet scripturæ. Seckend. lib. iii. sect. 35. §. cxxxii. p. 631.



of the *Confessional*, with greater propriety than they are in opposition to him, for assuming this as an original principle of the reformation, *viz. that faith and conscience, having no dependence on man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's authority.*

ADD to this, that there is something of a Sophism in this argument drawn from the protestants *deferring* to these authorities. You would argue from thence, that they submitted to be guided, as to their faith in certain doctrines, by human authority. But here is no submission of faith in the case. They do not acknowledge, that they admit these creeds, and councils, and antient ecclesiastical writers, as guides and directors of their faith. They only declare, that their sentiments on certain points correspond with those contained in certain writings, which were held in great estimation by their very enemies.

FOR, hear Luther, Sir, in the beginning of his reformation, so early as the year 1520; what

what was his opinion on this point [the authority of the fathers] at that time?—In his defence of the articles condemned by the bull of Leo X. he says, “ Let them be esteemed  
 “ holy men, and fathers of the Churches, yet  
 “ are they *mere men*, not to be compared with  
 “ the apostles and prophets, not superior or e-  
 “ qual in *authority* with them, but *subject* to  
 “ it (a).”

HEAR also what the same reformer saith, in his commentaries upon Genesis, chap. xxi. He observes, “ that the Papists draw articles of  
 “ faith from the sayings of the holy fathers,  
 “ and will not suffer them to be disputed. The  
 “ word of God alone demands assent, not ca-  
 “ nons or sayings of the fathers, *any farther*  
 “ than as they agree with *scripture* (b).”

## DAILLE

(a) Sint sancti viri et ecclesiarum patres, sed homines, et apostolis atque prophetis impares, et horum authoritati non prælati, nec æquati, sed subiecti. Vide Seckend. lib. i. sect. 3r. §. lxxvii. p. 119.

(b) Qui [papistæ] ex singulis dictis et verbis sanctorum patrum faciunt articulos fidei, quibus non liceat refragari—Ideo uni et soli verbo dei credendum est, non canonibus, non sanctorum patrum dictis, nisi quatenus cum verbo consentiunt.



DAILLE, in his treatise *de usu patrum*, says, that “ he never heard of any reformer, or ever  
 “ read in their writings, that they allowed the  
 “ authority of the fathers was a sufficient  
 “ ground of faith : But that some of them used  
 “ their evidence against the Papists, to prove  
 “ that *they* had introduced novel opinions and  
 “ corrupted the faith in later times (a.)”

AND in their publick confessions we find them “ avouching before God and the whole  
 “ Church, in heaven and in earth, that we do  
 “ with a true faith embrace all the writings of  
 “ the prophets and apostles (b).”—“ That the  
 “ apostle Peter hath said, that the holy scrip-  
 “ tures are not of any private interpretation ;  
 “ therefore we do not allow all expositions :—  
 “ But we acknowledge that interpretation of  
 “ scripture for authentical and proper, which  
 “ being taken from the *scriptures themselves*—  
 “ accordeth with the rule of faith and charity.

H

—Wherefore

(a) De usu patrum, cap. 17. p. 309, 310.

(b) Saxon confession.

“ —Wherefore we do not condemn the holy  
 “ treatises of the fathers *agreeing with the scrip-*  
 “ *tures*; from whom, notwithstanding, we do  
 “ modestly *dissent*,—as they are sometimes  
 “ found *altogether contrary* to the same. Neither  
 “ do we think that we do them any wrong,—  
 “ seeing that they will not have *their* writings  
 “ matched with the *canonical scriptures*,—but  
 “ bid us take those things that agree, and leave  
 “ those that disagree: And according to this  
 “ order we account of the decrees or canons of  
 “ councils (a).—“ Wherefore we do *for this*  
 “ *cause* also allow those three creeds, namely,  
 “ the Apostles, the *Nicene*, and *Atanasius’s*  
 “ *creed*, because they be agreeable to the *writ-*  
 “ *ten word of God* (b).”

THESE quotations, Sir, applied by yourself to  
 another purpose, may serve to shew, how little  
 regard we ought to pay to this argument in fa-  
 vour of *human authority* over faith and con-  
 science,

(a) *Latter confession of Helvetia.*

(b) *French confession.*



science, founded on the conduct of the protestants in the colloquy of *Ratisbone*, and to expose the sophistry thereof.

THE true protestant principle, we see, is this; to judge freely for ourselves of every thing that is proposed to our faith, whether, and how far it is agreeable to the *scriptures*, that is, to the *law of God*. And Calvin, even in the passage you next produce to prove, that human authority is to be admitted as a guide of men's faith, is not for settling any controversies, or disputes about doctrines, by *human authority* and *man's law*, but by the *word of God*. "If any man, says he, trouble the Church with an unwonted doctrine, and the matter proceeds so far that there be peril of greater dissension, the Church should first meet together, and examine the question propounded: At last, after just discussing had, bring forth a determination *taken out of the scriptures*, such as may both take away doubting from the people, and

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 “ treatises of the fathers *agreeing with the scrip-*  
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"stop the mouths of the wicked (a)."

WHICH appears to have been the sense of our own Church too—in the preface to *The Institution*

(a) 2d Letter, p. 10.

De spirituali tantum potestate loquor, quæ propria est ecclesiæ. Ea autem consistit vel in doctrinâ, vel in jurisdictione, vel in legibus ferendis. Locus de doctrinâ duas habet partes, authoritatem dogmatum tradendorum, et eorum explicationem. Calvin. instit. lib. iv. cap. viii. §. 1.—Nos certè libenter concedimus, si quo de dogmate incidat disceptatio, nullum esse nec melius nec certius remedium, quam si verorum episcoporum synodus conveniat, ubi contraversum dogma excutitur. Multo enim plus ponderis habebit ejusmodi definitio in quam communiter ecclesiarum pastores, invocato Christi spiritu, consenserint, quàm si quisque seorsum domi conceptam populo traderet, vel paucihomines privatim eam conficerent. Deinde ubi collecti in unum sunt episcopi, commodius in commune deliberant quid sibi et quâ formâ docendum sit, ne diversitas offendiculum pariat—Atque ita nos ipse pietatis sensus instituit, ut *si quis turbet ecclesiam dogmate inusitato, atque eò res perveniat ut sit periculum à graviore dissidio, conveniant prius ecclesiæ: quæstionem propositam examinent: demum, justâ discussione habitâ, definitionem ex scripturâ sumptam proferant, quæ et dubitationem in plebe tollat, et os obstruat improbis et cupidis hominibus, ne pergere amplius audeant.* Sic exorto Ario coacta est Nicena synodus, quæ suâ authoritate et sceleratos impii hominis conatus fregit, et pacem restituit ecclesiis quas vexaverat, et æternam Christi divinitatem contra sacrilegum ejus dogma asseruit. Calvin. instit. cap. ix. §. 13.



*Institution of a Christian Man.* “What a face  
 “would our Church hereafter wear, says the  
 “writer of it, were men to go on rashly to de-  
 “termine *out of their own fancies* the most im-  
 “portant doctrines and articles of faith, and  
 “worry one another with their controversies?—  
 “To drive which plague away from this king-  
 “dom, our renowned King (Hen. VIII.)  
 “thought proper to consult with some men of  
 “learning and integrity, whom he called toge-  
 “ther for that purpose, about framing a com-  
 “pendium of Christian institution, which  
 “should contain the doctrine necessary to in-  
 “struct the people in true piety and the law of  
 “God, and so clearly explain certain articles,  
 “at this time in controversy, that all men may  
 “see plainly what points are true and agreeable  
 “to the *catholic faith* (a).”

THE

(a) 2d Letter, p. 11.

Qualis enim futura esset ecclesiæ facies, si pergerent homines de gravissimis fidei dogmatibus atque articulis ex suo cerebro temerè pronunciare, et mutuis se concertationibus agitare ac laceßere? —quam pestem ab hac republicâ et regno suo clarissimus rex noster depellere atque arcere cogitans, accitis nuper aliquot eru-  
 ditis

THE original intention of this consultation, you see, (whatever the result of it might be) was not to bind on the conscience of the subject the doctrines and commandments of men; but only to set forth a compendium of *Christian* institution to instruct the people in true piety and the *law of God*. To have made the faith and consciences of his subjects dependant upon man's law would have been contrary to those original principles of reformation on which King Henry, in common with the rest of the first protestants, we may suppose to have proceeded, when he threw off subjection to the authority of the Pope. And indeed you yourself seem to allow as much (though how you came to

ditas viris, et de quorum integritate ipsius majestas. optimam opinionem conceperat, cum his consilium conferre dignatus est, de ejusmodi Christianæ institutionis formâ compendio perstringendâ, quæ necessariam ad erudiendum vulgus in verâ pietate et Deî lege doctrinam contineret, et articulos quosdam, de quibus hoc sæculo contentiones exillere cœperunt, ita dilucidè explicaret, ut quid in ejusmodi controversiis verum syncerumque esset, quid catholicæ fidei consentaneum ac pro certo tenendum, universi perspicerent ac clarè intelligerent.—Pia et catholica Christiani hominis institutio. Præfat. p. 3.



to make the concession at the heel of your authorities to the contrary is somewhat mysterious) when you say "that neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor our own reformers meant that men should believe their teachers, whether separate or assembled, since both are fallible, contrary to what appears to them, on the best use of their own understanding, with *all* helps (a), to be the dictate of reason or scripture; but only, that they should impartially and carefully attend to the informations, and allow a just weight to the learning and judgment, of those whom providence hath set over them (b)."

WE

(a) Helps to what, Sir?—To men's faith, or their understandings?—But are *all* confessions of faith, and *all* established articles of religion *helps*, either to men's faith, or their understandings?—If they are not *all* helps thereto, but *some* may even tend to *bewilder* men's understandings and *pervert* their faith, it will follow that, instead of being obliged to use *all* such helps, men should be at their perfect liberty to use or reject them as they think best, and that, by suffering themselves to be guided by *any* of them, after consulting them *all*, they may not be making the *best* use of their *own* understandings.

(b) 2d Letter, p. 11, 12.

WE come now to the last of those principles on which, according to the author of the *Confessional*, the first reformers went, when they withdrew from the communion of the Church of Rome, viz. *The Church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man's law; nor are the king's laws any farther to be obeyed than they agree with the law of God (a).*

YOUR observations on this head rather betray your inclination to find fault, than serve to confute any thing here advanced. “ Their principles were, you say, that princes should have a particular care of the public worship of God (b).” But what is this to the position, that *the Church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man's law?* — It is not easy to understand, how you would apply your remark to the point in question: “ Princes should have a particular care of the public

(a) *Confessional*, p. 2:

(b) 2d Letter. p. 12.



"public worship of God."--Yes, Sir, they should take *particular care* that the public worship of God be not, through restraint of *their* laws, conducted in a manner unwarranted by the *word* of God. But I suppose *this sort* of care in princes will be thought too inapplicable to your purpose in contesting the principle in question, to have been intended here. And you might think me uncandid, if I should suppose you intended *another sort* of care about the public worship of God, which princes should have, though it might imply greater pertinency in your objection.

As to your other observation, "that their  
 "commands in general, are to be obeyed; but  
 "if their commands are contrary to the com-  
 "mands of God, we must obey God rather  
 "than man (a);"  
 Is not this much the same with what is expressed, in other words, in the latter clause of the sentence under con-  
 sideration,

(a) 2d Letter. p. 12.

fideration, viz. *Nor are the King's laws any farther to be obeyed than they agree with the law of God?—*

You seem, however, to aim at some distinction between the duty of *public* and that of *private* christians, respecting submission to the king's laws. “Yet, as *private* christians, you “observe, we must submit to the unjust severities or punishments they inflict.” But, though I can see that Christians are, in their *private* capacity, forced of necessity sometimes to submit to the *unjust* severities and punishments inflicted upon them by princes, on account of religion, yet I don't see that they are bound *in duty* to submit thereto any more than Christians in a *public* capacity.

You refer us farther to one of the xxxix articles of the Church of *England*, for her doctrine on this point (a). It is an extraordinary kind of  
of

(b) Ibid. p. 12, 13.

Omnes etiam Christiani gladio seculari ex charitatis et spiritus directione lubentissimè obsequuntur.—Si tibi princeps injungat, ut papæ obedias, atque hoc vel illud credas, libros tradas, &c. ita  
ref-



of an appcal which you have frequently  
I 2 made,

respondeas: Parebo ratione corporis et bonorum; impera pro jure quod habes in terris, obsequar: sed non parebo si credere aut libros tradere jubes, sic enim tyrannicè imperas quæ jure imperare non potes. Si verò tibi sic respondentem bona tua auferat, aut poenâ te afficiat ob inobedientiam, beatus es: gratias age Deo, quod dignum te fecerit ad patiendum pro verbo ejus: perfer insani illius sævitiam, habebit judicem suum. Luther. de seculari potestate: Vide Seckend. lib. I. sect. 52. §. cxxvii. p. 211, 212.

Et Calvinus in institut. lib. IV. cap. xx. de politicâ administratione agit.—Cujus usus . . . non huc spectat duntaxat, ut spirent homines, edant, bibant, foveantur . . . . sed ne idololatria, ne in Dei nomen sacrilegia, ne adversus ejus veritatem, blasphemix, aliæque religionis offensiones publicè emergant ac in populum spargantur. . . . denique ut inter Christianos publica religionis facies exillat . . .

§. 3. — Nobis autem interim summoperè cavendum, ne illam plenam venerandæ majestatis magistratuum auctoritatem, quam Deus gravissimis edictis sanxit, etiam si etiam apud indignissimos resideat, atqui eam suâ nequitia, quantum in se est, polluant, spernamus aut violemus. Neque enim, si ultio Domini est effrenatæ dominationis correctio, ideo protinus demandatum nobis arbitremur: quibus nullum aliud quam parendi et patiendi datum est mandatum. De privatis hominibus semper loquor. §. 31.---

Adversus ipsum (Deum) si quid imperent, nullo fit nec loco nec numero: neque hic totam illam quâ magistratus pollent dignitatem quicquam moremur. . . . Scio quantum et quam præsens huic constantix periculum immineat . . . sed . . . obediendum Deo potius quam hominibus, hæc nos cogitatione consolemur, illam tum nos præstare quam Dominus exigit obedientiam, dum *quid vis perpetimur* potius quam à pietate deslectamus. §. 32.

made, in the course of this argument (though I have chosen but once for all to remark it here) to established articles and confessions of faith in protestant churches, when the very question is concerning the propriety of establishing them, and the consistency of protestant Churches, in this respect, with their original principles of reformation.

HOWEVER, this xxxvii. article to which you refer us, should the propriety of the reference be admitted, appears not in the least to countenance either of these positions, *viz. That the Church of Christ is congregated by man's law; or, That the king's laws are any farther to be obeyed than they agree with the law of God.*

THUS, Sir, it appears that you have not refuted those principles, which are laid down in the *Confessional* as the *original* principles of the reformation. It hath appeared also, in the course of this examination, that the principles, which you would substitute in their room, are not the *known principles* of the first protestants.

Con-



Consequently, you have not proved that which you have asserted, viz. *that subscription to articles of religion, and the establishment of confessions of faith and doctrine, is, on the known principles of the first protestants, not only justifiable but necessary (a).*

BUT, to gain credit with your readers you seem to have thought nothing more to be needful than to assert roundly, quote plentifully, and then confidently conclude in your own favour. For, having finished your contrast between the principles of the first reformers, as laid down in the *Confessional*, and those which you call their *known principles*, as published in their writings, (b) you thus, without more ado, draw your conclusion. . . . “ Such  
“ were the principles of the first protestant  
“ *Churches*, (c) by their own express testimony;  
“ with

(a) 2d Letter, page 1, 2.

(b) Ibid. p. 1.

(c) But the principles, or rather the decisions of *Churches* are not to be confounded with the principles of the *first reformers*. The principles you contend for may, perhaps, be found to accord with



“ with which, confessions, of faith, and articles  
 “ of religion, are not only very consistent, but  
 “ those principles directly led to the establish-  
 “ ment of them.” (a)

TRULY, Sir, if the principles of the first protestants are really in contrast with those, which the author of the *Confessional* hath given us, we cannot deny your consequence, as to their *tendency*. Let it be observed however, that, if *such* principles led protestants to establish their present confessions of faith and articles of religion, they might, with equal consistency, have led them to establish *any other* confessions and articles; or they will serve very conveniently, whenever they may be so disposed, to lead them back, with perfect consistency, to that antient establishment, against which their forefathers, if they held *such* principles, did with a most inconsistent solemnity protest.

AND  
 with the decisions of certain *established* Churches that bear the name of, *protestant*; but you will never be able to prove, that they are the principles of the *first reformers*, those principles on which they went *when* they withdrew from the communion of the Church of *Rome*.

(a) 2d Letter, p.

AND indeed, Sir, if you will give yourself leave to reflect coolly on the consequence of admitting, that the first reformers held principles inconsistent with those which you have attacked, you will not be displeased with the liberty I take, of congratulating you upon your want of success in the attempt to disprove them. For how could we justify the conduct of the first protestants in separating from the communion, or our own Church in disclaiming the authority of the Church of *Rome*, once held sacred, but on some such principles as these, *viz. That, in matters of religion, which regard the salvation of the soul, Christians are not subject to any human authority, having been by the Gospel restored to the glorious privilege of working out their own salvation by their own understandings and endeavours?—That for this work of salvation sufficient means are afforded in the holy scriptures, without having recourse to the commandments of mere men for that purpose----*That faith and conscience depend not on man's law; nor are to be compelled by man's authority, &c.



If what you contend for, as a principle of the *first* protestants, and of all protestants, might be admitted, viz. *that we are not by the gospel liberty discharged from ALL human authority in matters of religion* (a), how will you prove, that the Gospel hath set us loose from *any* human authority therein?—How will you prove, for instance, the right of rejecting the authority of the Church of *Rome*, if she rightfully claimeth any authority at all respecting men's faith, consciences, and the salvation of their souls?—Will you say, that her claim of authority in these matters was become exorbitant and out of all bounds?—She denies it. Who is to decide?—Do you make your appeal to the holy scriptures?—She claims the right of interpreting them, and justifies her authority by her interpretation. Will you say “that her  
 “interpretation of scripture, on which she  
 “builds her spiritual dominion is not the true  
 “one?—that ignorance, obstinacy or wrong af-  
 “fections had influenced her to interpret the di-  
 “vine word falsely, sometimes even in points  
 “wherein

(a) 2d Letter, p. 4.

“wherein man’s soul’s health was at stake (a)?”

— But if you deny her interpretation to be just, you prefer your own private judgement to her’s. And what is this but to disclaim all human authority in matters of religion?—For it is the same thing, if we apply the instance to any other human authority, whether councils, the writings of the Fathers, or Civil magistracy itself.

So also the Church of *Rome* claims a right to prescribe her own doctrines and commandments on this pretence, that the means afforded in the holy scriptures for the work of salvation are not sufficient without them. You allow her *some* authority in this matter by allowing her pretence for it to be good, *viz.* the necessity, on account of the insufficiency of scripture-means, of having recourse to *human* doctrines and commandments, in a proper sense (b). This being admitted, you bring the question to this point—What is the *proper* sense, in which, the holy

K scriptures

(a) 2d Letter, p. 8.

(b) Ibid. p. 7.



scriptures being insufficient for the work of salvation, it may be necessary to have recourse to *her* doctrines and commandments?—How far may you lawfully submit to her commandments, or how far are you bound to obey them?—Will you say, “so far forth as is permitted in “the Gospel?”—But in this case you give up the authority of the Gospel by disallowing its sufficiency for the work of salvation, without having recourse to the commandments of men. For in those things wherein it is deficient it can be no authority. Will you say, then, that she teaches doctrines and gives commandments which are *unnecessary* for the work of salvation?—But this is to judge for *yourself*, and to have recourse to her authority only so far as you please; in other words, you allow nothing at all in this matter to *human authority* (for the Church of Rome is here mentioned only by way of instance) but take upon you to work out your own salvation in your *own* way.

ONCE more; If the principle, which you seem to question the reasonableness of, *viz. That faith*

*faith and conscience, having no dependance upon human laws, are not to be compelled by human authority, must not be admitted; what apology have we to offer for protestantism?—According to you we must frame one upon some such distinction as this, That human authority exercised in order to guide men in the understanding of the scriptures protestants allow to be reasonable, though not an authority which compells faith and conscience (a). But authority is authority: And, if your understanding is to be guided by it in any instance, without being at liberty to reject it if you think proper, then you are subject to an authority which effectually compells you. You give up your own understanding, and implicitly follow another guide. For that is no authority which one is at liberty to follow or depart from as one sees fit.*

MAY I hope therefore, Reverend Sir, that you will, on reviewing *this part* of your work, and better considering the nature of your enterprize,

K 2

take

(a) 2d Letter, p. 8.



take in good part this attempt as well to vindicate the original principles of reformation, as to extricate the question itself from that load of superfluous animadversions upon the *Confessional* and its author, under which it lies in a manner *suffocated*. It will be no reflection upon your abilities and literary prowess, though you should be thought to have suffered a defeat in such a daring attack as you have made. For the principles are impregnable, being fenced about with proof of holy writ, as well as the testimonies of the first reformers.—But to have made such an attack, I must say, doth not much commend your prudence, or do you any honour, as a Clergyman of the Church of *England*. For what must be the reflections of every good and understanding Christian, and of the thinking and consistent part of our protestant brethren of the establishment, on finding it, if not openly avowed, yet plainly enough suggested in the whole turn and complexion of your argument; That, *in matters of religion, we are not at liberty to be guided by the authority of Christ Jesus alone (a).*

That,

That, in a proper sense, the holy scriptures do not afford sufficient means, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men, for the work of salvation (a) : That all things needful for spiritual living and man's soul's health are not so mentioned and shewed in the scriptures; but that faith and conscience are in some measure dependent upon man's laws, and are to be guided, if not compelled, by man's authority (b).

If these are not your principles, then your zealously contending against the opposite principles laid down in the *Confessional*, is altogether unmeaning, except indeed what may be meant besides arguing to the point in question; and, of that, whatever it may be, you ought to be ashamed. If they are your principles and what you would seriously contend for, you are to be pitied for your narrow way of thinking on the subject of religious liberty: And it is to be regretted that you should have represented the Church, of which you give us to understand you are a member and a subscribing minister,

to

(a) 2d Letter, p. 7.

(b) 1st. p. 8.



to be established on so narrow a foundation.

You have in one place (a) intimated, that the author of the *Confessional* hath charged the articles of faith in the Church of *England* with being dishonourable to the sacred writings; and that he hath made a rude and open attack upon the established doctrines of our Church. I believe, Sir, you will not find in all the *Confessional* so much as an intimation of his judging any one of the articles of faith in the Church of *England*, to be dishonourable to the sacred writings; much less will you be able to find a rude and open attack there made upon her established doctrines. Indeed it were not to the purpose of the author of that justly celebrated work to give his sentiments upon them, whatever he might think, and may with propriety have said, of *subscription* to any articles of religion, imposed and enforced by human authority: Which shews, by the bye, how greatly you have mistaken, or how you would confound the design of the *Confessional*. But you, Sir, besides offering a most ridiculous apology for the inconsistent

and

(a) 2d Letter, p. 50.

and absolutely contradictory senses which have been put upon *two* of her articles, (a) have, by representing Her as established upon other principles than those undoubtedly protestant ones laid down in the *Confessional*, taken the most effectual method to discredit and debase Her. (b)

Let

(a) The 1st and the xviith.

The following passage from the writer, whom you remark upon, might have served as a caution to you against entering into a formal defence of prevarication: But, as you have not availed yourself of it for this purpose, it may serve to make you blush now on the recollection of your apology for equivocal subscription to the abovementioned articles.

“ The Casuistry that allows different men to subscribe the same set of articles, which, as they all agree, were intended to prevent diversities of opinions, not only in *different*, but even in *contrary* senses, must be weak and contemptible, beyond any thing of the kind that ever came from the Jesuits.”

*Confessional*, 2d Edit. p. 122, 123.

(b) How much more honourable an idea hath Bishop *Jewel* given us of the principles of our ecclesiastical Establishment, than that which this laboured attempt of your's to prove the duty of submitting to human authority, in matters of religion, suggests!

“ We receive and embrace (says the Church of England by the pen of Bishop *Jewel*) “ all the canonical scriptures, both of the Old and New testament—we own them to be the heavenly voices by which God hath revealed his will to us; in them

“ ONLY



Let me, therefore, recommend it to you to consider, whether this rude stroke against the very root of Protestantism *would have been suffered in any other protestant Church in Europe, than that of whose mildness and moderation* it were to be wished you had availed yourself to, as good a purpose, and in as worthy a cause as the author, whom you have so ungenerously attacked, has done. The manly freedom with which he hath delivered his sentiments, at the same time that it shews a becoming confidence in the present temper of the Church of *England*, is a much truer compliment upon our Ecclesiastical constitution, than the vulgar apprehension which you seem

“ ONLY can the mind of man acquiesce; in them all that is  
 “ necessary for salvation is *abundantly* and *plainly* contained;—  
 “ they are the very might and power of God unto salvation;  
 “ they are the foundations of the apostles and prophets upon  
 “ which the Church of God is built; they are the most certain  
 “ and infallible rule, by which the Church may be reduced if She  
 “ happen to stagger, slip, or err, by which all Ecclesiastical doc-  
 “ trines ought to be tried; no law, no tradition, no custom, is  
 “ to be received or continued, if it be contrary to scripture; no,  
 “ though St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven should come  
 “ and teach otherwise.” Vide Conf. 2d Edit. p. ■

seem to have entertained, that She is highly aggrieved and offended thereat.

As to your personal treatment of the author of the *Confessional*, it was my intention from the first to have forborn any mention of it. But I hope the Publick, nor yourself, Sir, will think that I have greatly transgressed the bounds I have prescribed myself in this address, by remarking, That, if the Author of the *Confessional* hath sometimes in his personal strictures deviated from his main design, and if for this he must be blamed, it very ill becomes his reprover to have done the same thing, not only much more frequently and less pertinently, but in a far more *ungracious* manner.

AND now permit me to assure you of my heartily joining you in my good wishes to the Author of the *Confessional*, and that,

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your Well-wisher,

BENJAMIN DAWSON



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